

# Transforming Schools through Expanded Learning Time

## Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School

*For years, Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School was plagued by low student achievement and high staff turnover. Then, in 2010, with an expanded school schedule made possible with federal funding, Orchard Gardens began a remarkable turnaround. Today, the school is demonstrating how increased learning time, combined with other key turnaround strategies, can dramatically improve the performance of even the nation's most troubled schools. This case study, the first in a new series, takes you inside the transformation of Orchard Gardens.*

## About the Series

Policymakers and educators across the country are grappling with the compelling challenge of how to reform our nation's underperforming schools and better prepare all American students—especially those living in poverty—for long-term success. In 2009, President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan set out an ambitious effort intended to spur dramatic improvement among persistently low-performing schools by infusing over \$3.5 billion into the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. To be eligible for this money, schools must adopt one of four models prescribed by SIG guidelines: Restart, Closure, Transformation, or Turnaround. Schools that choose the Turnaround model are required, as essential elements of their overall strategy, to overhaul existing staff, upgrade their data systems, and increase learning time. This new time requirement for SIG schools has led to widespread experimentation with a diversity of programs and schedules that increase learning time beyond the conventional school day and year.

As momentum is growing for schools to expand their calendar to promote positive change, a new question is emerging for the education field: How can schools that

are undergoing major turnaround efforts maximize the great potential of expanded time? To explore the answer to this question, the National Center on Time & Learning has launched **Transforming Schools through Expanded Learning Time**, a series of case studies examining schools that have increased learning time as part of a comprehensive school turnaround and are showing promising early results.

Like Orchard Gardens, all the schools that will be profiled in this series are doing more than just expanding the school day or year; they are also making fundamental improvements in teaching and learning, using data more effectively, building a more positive learning environment, and addressing the social and emotional needs of their high-poverty students. No matter what their institution's history, current situation, or record of progress, leaders across these schools agree that more learning time galvanizes and strengthens their other reforms.



**“You have to have the right people, in an environment that encourages learning, and data to guide what you’re doing. To make all those things work well, you also need more time—for students to catch up academically and for teachers to become even better.”**

**Andrew Bott, Principal**





**O**rchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School (OGPS) opened in 2003 amidst much fanfare. Its \$30 million building—complete with computer and science labs, a music room, and dance studio—represented a large-scale effort to revitalize one of Boston’s poorest communities. But for its first seven years, this promising new school was plagued by low academic performance and high staff turnover.

With five different principals over the course of seven years, student achievement at Orchard Gardens regularly ranked near the bottom of all schools in Massachusetts. Scores for the school’s 700 students—92 percent of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch—placed OGPS consistently in the lowest tier, even when compared to other schools serving similarly large proportions of low-income students. From 2003 to 2010, Orchard Gardens proficiency rates on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) stagnated below 20 percent in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math. “The best this school had ever done in the past was getting one-fifth of our students to proficiency,” Toby Romer, the school’s director of professional development and data inquiry, now says.

In April 2010, Boston Public Schools (BPS) designated Orchard Gardens and 11 other district schools for turnaround due to chronically low student achievement. To lead the turnaround efforts at Orchard Gardens, BPS Superintendent Carol Johnson tapped Andrew Bott, one of the district’s rising young principals, who had led Boston’s Rogers Middle School to significant student gains. “When the superintendent calls you and asks you to take on Orchard Gardens, which had been a huge failure for so many reasons, it’s hard to say no. I believe that the success of BPS is dependent on the success of all schools, and I wanted to take on this challenge,” Bott explains.

Shortly after his appointment was announced, Bott spent significant time in the building to observe classrooms and the climate at Orchard Gardens. Ultimately, Bott made the decision to replace approximately 80 percent of the school’s staff. With support from Orchard Gardens’s strategic partner, Massachusetts 2020 (Mass 2020), Bott also initiated the school’s application for School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds, securing \$3.7 million to be used over three years. For the 2010-2011 school year, these funds allowed the school to increase per pupil spending by approximately \$1,500. Federal guidelines for the SIG program also granted Bott, as a principal of a turnaround school, increased flexibility and control over budgeting, staffing, and curriculum.<sup>1</sup> As Bott recounts, “You’re presented with all this freedom: staffing autonomy, curricular and assessment autonomy, and an infusion of money, and it’s very exciting.”

This excitement has been met with promising results. With an expanded school schedule and other resources, Orchard Gardens has made tremendous strides in only one year. While school-wide proficiency rates are still low overall, student performance on the most recent (2011) Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) jumped 10 percent in ELA and 16 percent in math from the 2010 school year. The increase in student achievement has placed Orchard Gardens in the 63rd percentile for student growth (SGP) in ELA among all Massachusetts schools and at the 79th percentile in math. The median SGP for students in Orchard Gardens ranks better than 87 percent of schools in Massachusetts in ELA and 98 percent of schools in math.<sup>2</sup>

This case study takes readers inside the powerful turnaround at Orchard Gardens to understand the significant catalyzing role increased learning time has played in the school’s multifaceted reform effort.

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the autonomies granted to any turnaround school, Orchard Gardens had enjoyed other freedoms since its opening in 2003. As one of Boston’s 21 pilot schools, OGPS already had more flexibility in its staffing, budgeting, governance, curriculum, and scheduling than traditional Boston Public Schools.

<sup>2</sup> The Massachusetts growth model measures how individual students perform each year compared with peers across the state who have the same performance history. In turn, the relative capacity of a school to improve student performance is determined by identifying the median student growth percentile (SGP) of all of its students.

# Improving Schools with More Time

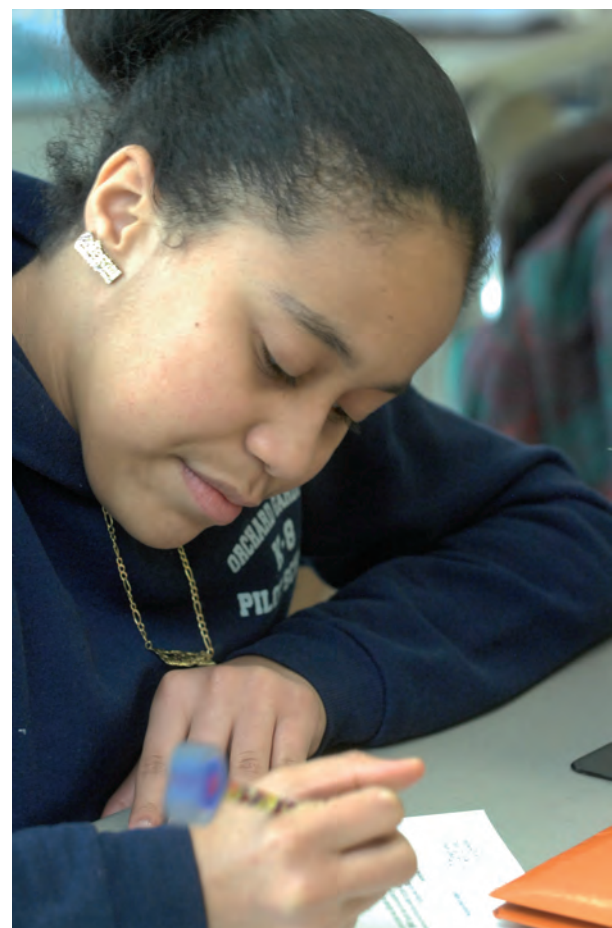
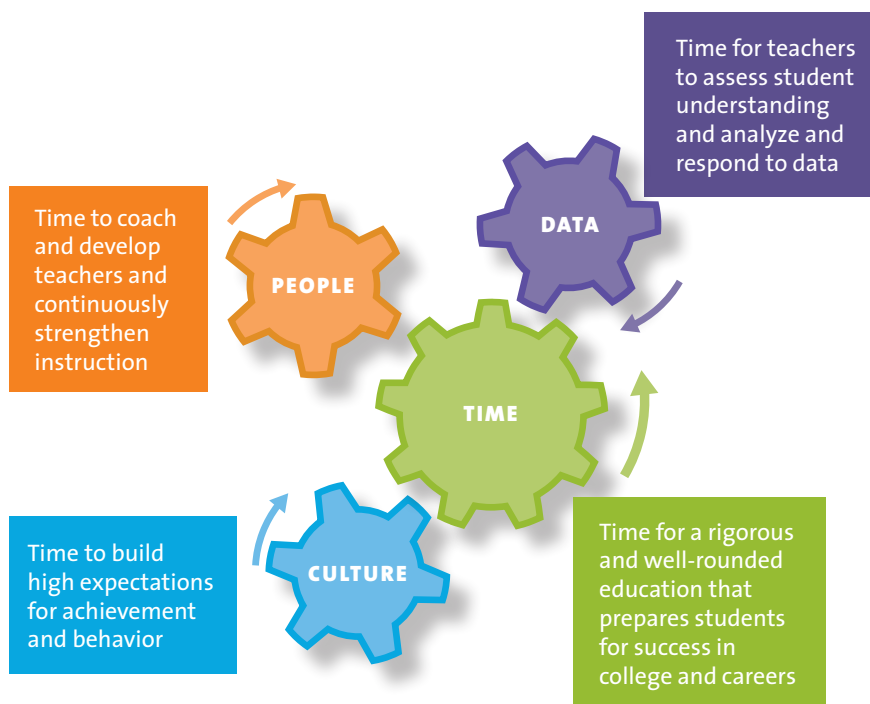
At Orchard Gardens, Bott and his leadership team intentionally embedded increased learning time in an innovative school improvement model. This model comprises four interactive components:

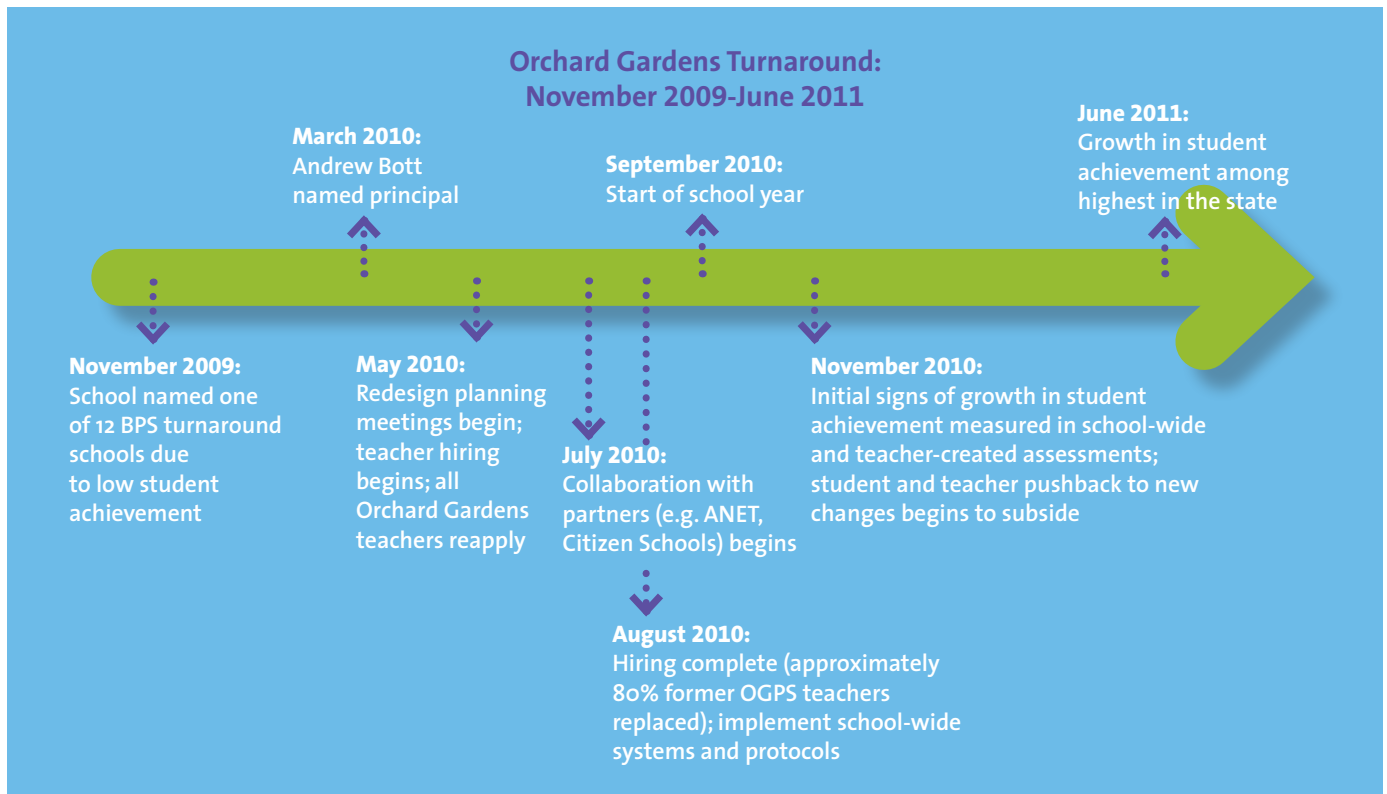
- 1.**Time:** More time for rigorous academic instruction, engaging activities, and teacher collaboration
- 2.**People:** Significant improvements in human capital (strong leaders and teachers) by recruiting, hiring, and developing staff
- 3.**Data:** Intensive use of data to drive improvements in instruction and respond to individual student learning needs
- 4.**School Culture:** Dramatic changes to school-wide behavioral and academic expectations

As depicted in the figure below, expanding learning time can have a mutually catalyzing and supporting effect with the three other reform gears. In this diagram, the gear labeled People refers to a wide range of efforts at Orchard Gardens to develop or hire talented school leaders and highly effective teachers. While not all improvements to human capital require additional time, this case study demonstrates the ways in which additional time can improve teacher effectiveness. Further, the corollary is that strong teachers and leaders use time well—that is, the two gears work together. The gear labeled Data refers to the many facets of improving the collection and use of data. While developing excellent data systems does not

require an expanded-school schedule, to make full use of these systems, schools do need more time to conduct assessments, analyze, and respond to data. Again, reciprocally, the deft use of this data renders learning time more effective because it guides investing instructional time exactly where individual students need it most. Finally, to establish a positive School Culture, schools do not necessarily need to expand learning time, but additional time can allow them to offer a range of activities that build school spirit, teach shared values, and set and reinforce high expectations for behavior and achievement. This positive school culture also helps turn the gears by making the time for learning more productive.

All four gears in this diagram have been fundamental to the gains at Orchard Gardens. While the gear of Time helps turn the other three gears, in the absence of the others, this gear will spin unproductively. In that event, more time will have only limited impact on student learning. Bott describes the implementation of this model at Orchard Gardens: “You need a lot of things working together. You have to have the right people, in an environment that encourages learning, and data to guide what you’re doing. To make all those things work well, you also need more time—for students to catch up academically and learn skills beyond those that are tested, and for teachers to look at data and share practices to become even better teachers.”





Using this framework, in the spring of 2010, Bott began planning for the upcoming school year. He started by creating a strong and unique leadership team composed of positions the school had never staffed in the past, such as a director of professional development and data inquiry (Toby Romer) and a chief operating officer (Michelle Boyers). School administrators then led a series

of “redesign meetings,” open to all staff, throughout late spring and into the summer to plan for the year ahead (see “Planning for the 2010-2011 School Year,” page 6). Bott then brought in a number of partners to fulfill various roles throughout the school year, providing assistance in implementing changes, non-academic student supports, and academic and enrichment programs.

### Orchard Gardens Partners: 2010–2011 School Year

Assistance in implementing changes	Non-academic student supports	Academic and enrichment programs
<b>Teach Plus:</b> teacher recruitment and hiring	<b>Boston Medical Center:</b> health services for all students	<b>Citizen Schools:</b> academic and enrichment for sixth- and seventh-grade students
<b>Teach for America (TFA):</b> teacher recruitment and hiring	<b>Play Ball:</b> middle school sports teams	<b>City Year:</b> in-school and after-school academic supports
<b>Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI):</b> school reform map and community engagement	<b>Playworks:</b> recess activities	<b>Thompson Island Outward Bound:</b> outdoor summer learning for selected fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students
<b>Achievement Network (ANET):</b> benchmark assessments and data analysis tools		
<b>Mass 2020:</b> expanded day schedule, hiring, and professional development support		

## Planning for the 2010-2011 School Year

From May 25 to July 1 2010, Orchard Gardens and Mass 2020 held a series of weekly “redesign” meetings open to both returning and new staff. Though topics varied weekly, each was tied to people, data, culture, or time.

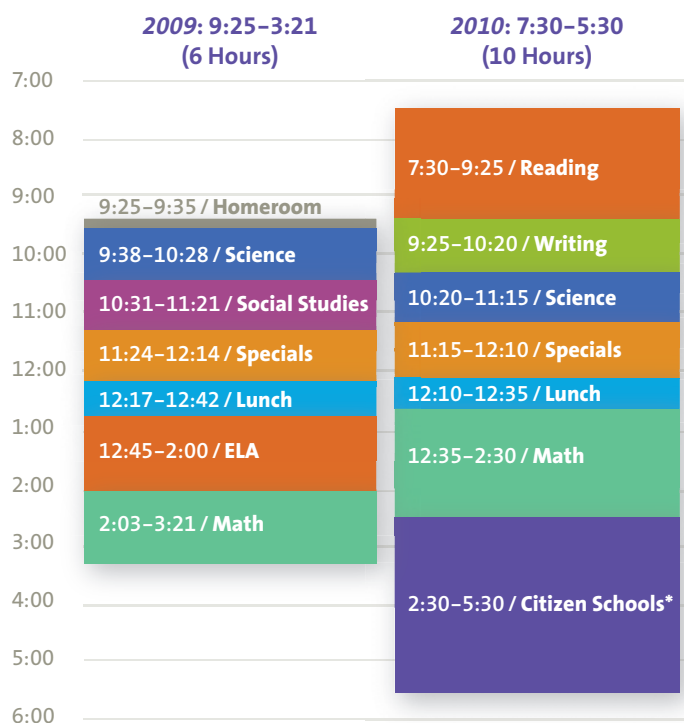
<b>May 25th: Introducing New Staff and Changes</b>	<b>June 15th: Developing an Academic Focus</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce new staff, including new principal, Andrew Bott</li> <li>• Discuss people, data, and time strategies in small groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss four potential focus areas: open response writing, non-fiction reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and number sense</li> </ul>
<b>June 1st: Building a Positive School Culture</b>	<b>June 22nd: Differentiating Instruction and Support</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address social and emotional well-being of students</li> <li>• Suggest ways to engage parents and families</li> <li>• Recommend ways to recognize student achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss people, data, and time strategies among three academy teams (Grades K–2, 3–5, and 6–8)</li> <li>• Design methods to monitor student progress</li> <li>• Identify areas for further professional development</li> </ul>
<b>June 8th: Analyzing MCAS Data</b>	<b>July 1st: Creating a Mission and a Vision</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver training on data inquiry protocol</li> <li>• Identify skill gaps in prior year’s MCAS in small groups, by grade and content level</li> <li>• Advance instructional strategies to address skill deficits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize plans for upcoming school year</li> <li>• Plan grade and content level teams</li> <li>• Develop a new positive behavior incentive system</li> </ul>

## More Time for Focused Academics and a Well-Rounded Education

The longer school day presented a dramatic change for students when they returned to school in September. One hour was added each day for students in grades K to 5 and 8, and four hours for students in grades 6 and 7. For all students, the new school day created more time for ELA and math, with 110 minutes for each subject in 2010 compared to only 75 minutes in 2009. “One of the biggest reasons for my students’ success this past year was the extended period of time with them,” says Ben Rockoff, the school’s seventh-grade math teacher in the 2010-2011 school year who now serves as the Academy director for grades 6 to 8, providing support to teachers and students in those grades. “I could do so much more with my students because I saw them for almost two hours each day—and nine hours each week.” From 2010 to 2011, among Rockoff’s seventh-grade math classes, students’ median growth ranked at the 92nd percentile among all Massachusetts seventh-grade students; only three seventh-grade math classes in the state demonstrated greater improvement.

In addition to more time for core academics, the expanded day includes more time for academic support and enrichment courses—including visual art, theater, dance, music, Mandarin, and physical education. From 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday,

### Sample 6th and 7th Grade Student Schedules



\*see Partnership with Citizen Schools for detailed daily schedule



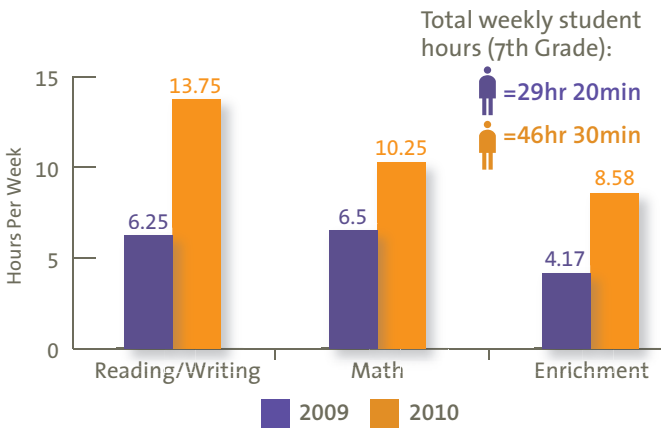
sixth and seventh graders receive homework support, math instruction, apprenticeship opportunities, and college-readiness courses offered by Citizen Schools, a major partner of Orchard Gardens (see “Partnership with Citizen Schools,” page 8, for daily schedule). On Fridays, sixth and seventh graders are dismissed at 2:30.

Although the school day for students in grades K to 5 and eighth grade ends at 2:30 every day, many stay after school. Staff from City Year—an AmeriCorps program that supports schools across the country—tutor approximately 30 students in the eighth grade after school. Younger students also receive after-school tutoring from their classroom teachers, while a number of other students in grades K to 5 are enrolled in enrichment programs after school.

“The longer day gives me time to do homework and do things we’d never done before, like apprenticeships [provided by Citizen Schools],” says Jessica, who began attending Orchard Gardens in 2008, as a fourth-grade student. “I have classes that I’d never had before, and it gives me more time to be with my friends.”

“The existing schedule just wouldn’t have allowed us to both make the gains we wanted to make academically and educate kids more broadly in ways that aren’t measured by MCAS,” says Toby Romer. As Andrew Bott explains, “We wanted to balance the additional academics with the enrichments for kids so they like school. Between the enrichments provided by our teachers as well as those by our partners, we’re able to provide kids with the educational opportunities and supports many suburban kids receive.”

Student Weekly Hours: Academics and Enrichment (2009 vs. 2010)



Student Pushback to the Expanded Day

“At the start of the year, we definitely had students who complained about being in school longer, especially the sixth- and seventh-grade students,” says Rockoff. Carlos, a seventh grader who has been at the school since he was in Kindergarten recalls his and his classmates’ reaction to the new schedule. “At first, we didn’t like the longer day. We thought we’d be really bored staying in school until 5:30 every day, but once we got used to [the expanded-time schedule] we realized that school was actually more fun than it was last year.”





## Partnership with Citizen Schools

Founded in 1995, Citizen Schools provides expanded-day programming for approximately 4,500 students in 18 cities across the country. During the 2010-2011 school year, Orchard Gardens partnered with Citizen Schools to provide academic and enrichment programming for all sixth- and seventh-grade students. From 2:30 to 3:30, Orchard Gardens sixth and seventh graders receive homework support from one of 12 Citizen Schools staff members. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, after homework help, these students participate in apprenticeships from 3:30 until 5:30. Citizen Schools apprenticeships give Orchard Gardens students the opportunity to learn about a particular career path directly from volunteers who work in that field. Apprenticeships vary, from staging mock trials and building solar cars to creating video games. Each semester's apprenticeship culminates in a WOW presentation, featuring productions and exhibitions of finished products.

On Mondays and Thursdays, instead of apprenticeships, students go from homework support to an hour-long math period, from 3:30 to 4:30, taught by Citizen Schools teaching fellows; both the homework help and math classes average approximately 15 students. To align content with lessons taught by Orchard Gardens teachers, Citizen Schools teaching fellows attended math department meetings each week. "In March," says David Hersey, one of 12 Citizen Schools staff members placed at Orchard Gardens, "the math team told us they didn't have enough time to go through geometry with their students, so we coordinated with them to give students more instruction in area, surface area, and volume during their time with us." From 4:30 to 5:30 Mondays and Thursdays, students take a college to career connection (C3) course offered by Citizen Schools, where they learn many of the non-academic skills needed to be successful in college and the workplace.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2:30-3:30	Homework	Homework	Homework	Homework	No Programs
3:30-4:30	Math Lesson	Apprenticeship	Apprenticeship	Math Lesson	
4:30-5:30	College/Career			College/Career	





# New Teachers and More Time for Relevant Professional Development

Prior to 2010, chronic staff turnover at Orchard Gardens had created not only a sense of instability, but also a general lack of commitment from teachers who had been placed at the school. Kellie Njenga, one of only two current staff members who have been at OGPS since its opening in 2003, described previous years' staff climate and composition: "Every year, at least half of our staff turned over. A lot of them had been placed here because they had tenure and we had open positions, but they didn't really want to be here." Starting in spring 2010, Orchard Gardens leadership began determining which of the school's existing teachers would be replaced, and began working with Mass 2020, Teach for America (TFA), and Teach Plus to recruit talented teachers who had demonstrated past success in urban classrooms. "Mass 2020, TFA, and Teach Plus really helped us get some great teachers," says Bott. "They met with us over the spring and summer to select individuals who would be a really good fit here." Although students had grown accustomed to seeing new teachers in the school each year, the 2010-2011 staff was distinctive. "A big difference between this year and past years," says Njenga, the school's Academy director for grades 3 to 5, "is that our new teachers were not only good teachers, but they also wanted to be here and be part of this effort to really

turn Orchard Gardens around. Bott agrees: "Now we have great teachers who've been teaching for a few years and other great teachers who have been teaching for 35."

## Additional Time for Structured Teacher Collaboration

Along with a talented and committed staff, the school leaders also created time for teachers to meet, plan, and learn from one another. With a longer school day, Orchard Gardens teachers are given additional time for both instruction and collaboration. Although the actual teacher work week has been extended by five hours, teachers only teach an additional four hours compared to years past; the remaining time is devoted to added planning and teacher collaboration. During the 2010-2011 school year, sixth- through eighth-grade teachers began to meet both in grade level and content teams. Content team meetings last 100 minutes and follow a highly structured protocol intended to focus teachers solely on data analysis and instructional strategies. Teachers also meet in grade level teams for 50 minutes to discuss administrative and discipline issues. "We thought setting aside two separate times would help teachers focus only on the data and instruction during the 100-minute planning period," says Toby Romer, Director of Professional Development and Data Inquiry.

## Orchard Gardens Teacher Work Week: 2009–2010 School Year vs. 2010–2011 School Year

### 2009: 9:25–3:21 (6-hour day) Monday-Friday

9:25–9:38	Homeroom
9:38–10:55	Instruction (section 1)
10:55–11:52	Prep
11:52–12:17	Academic Support
12:17–12:45	Lunch
12:45–2:03	Instruction (section 2)
2:03–3:21	Instruction (section 3)

### 2010: 7:35–2:25 (7-hour day)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7:35–8:30	Instruction (section 1)	Instruction (section 2)	Instruction (section 2)	Instruction (section 1)	Instruction (section 3)
8:30–9:25		Instruction (section 3)			
9:25–10:20	Instruction (section 2)	Prep	Grade Team Meeting	Prep	Prep
10:20–11:15	Prep	Content Team Meeting (Data Inquiry)	Instruction (section 1)	Instruction (section 3)	Instruction (section 2)
11:15–12:10	Instruction (section 2)				
12:10–12:35	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:35–1:30	Instruction (section 3)	Instruction (section 1)	Instruction (section 3)	Instruction (section 2)	Instruction (section 1)
1:30–2:25					



Each 100-minute meeting is led by one of the school's 15 teacher leaders. Orchard Gardens teacher leaders are part of a program called T3 (Turnaround Teacher Teams) that is managed by Teach Plus. The T3 program recruits, selects, and trains effective teachers who collaborate to help turn around low-performing schools. T3 teachers receive a \$6,000 stipend for taking on additional leadership responsibilities in the school. Romer serves as a coach to the T3 teacher leaders. He meets with them before each meeting to create an agenda and debrief previous weeks' meetings. Romer also sits in on every 100-minute meeting to listen, and provide occasional feedback, as teachers discuss data and their students' progress. "We had common planning time in the past," says Njenga. "but it happened infrequently, and the time was almost always spent on operational issues. Now, during the 100-minute meetings, the teacher leader always has an agenda and a clear objective. For example, in one meeting, the objective may be 'identify and place students into small group instruction during guided reading.' Just like we have objectives for our students to reach in each of our lessons, we wanted teachers to be able to come away from each meeting with something they'd accomplished."

### Redesigned Professional Development

In addition to weekly collaboration meetings, Orchard Gardens schedules 127 hours of professional development

throughout the year—compared to only 30 hours at other Boston Public Schools. At OGPS, this time is distributed throughout the year, including the summer months. During the school year, 40 professional development hours are devoted to 90-minute school-wide, teacher-led professional development sessions held every two weeks. While Orchard Gardens has always had more professional development time compared to other Boston Public Schools, the time was often misspent. "In the past, more than 50 percent of the school's staff said professional development opportunities didn't fulfill their needs," says Principal Andrew Bott. To provide teachers with relevant strategies they could use to improve instruction, Orchard Gardens made a number of changes to its professional development objectives in the 2010-2011 school year. These changes included empowering teachers to lead trainings, aligning professional development to school-wide academic goals, and conducting frequent teacher observations. The school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)—consisting of its 15 teacher leaders, Bott, Academy directors, and led by Romer—meets for 90 minutes every other Tuesday after school to plan professional development, identify teachers to lead these trainings, and help teachers plan and prepare sessions. Mass 2020 also attends ILT meetings and professional development, providing support in planning sessions and monitoring teacher responses.

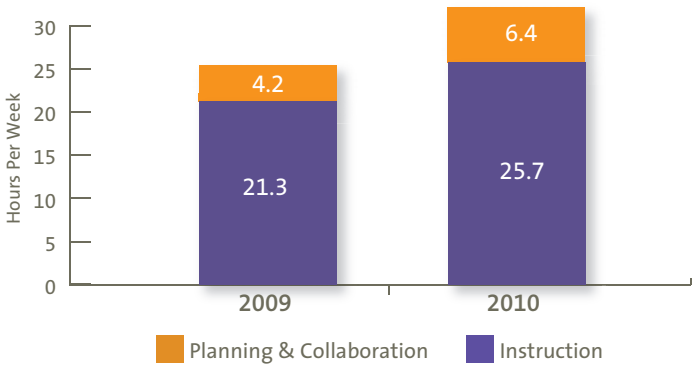


The school's new professional development model has been effective in strengthening teacher development and collaboration among staff. Teachers who are selected to present during professional development sessions have the opportunity to practice their presentations in front of the ILT before presenting to the whole staff, gaining feedback from administrators and other teachers. "Having our own teachers lead sessions did a few things," says Njenga. "First, we're recognizing our teachers for their strengths. Second, presenters are getting valuable feedback from the ILT. Third, as an audience, teachers are much more likely to listen to one of their peers than an outside coach or someone brought in by the district." Says Romer, "I think teachers really get a lot out of our professional development, both as an audience and also as presenters. We survey our staff after each session on a five-point scale, with '5' being the highest score." Professional development trainings throughout the 2010-2011 school year averaged a score of 4.1, compared to previous years in which fewer than half the staff found professional development to be meaningful.

**Frequent Observation and Feedback**

Teachers are also supported through frequent observations from school administrators. During observations, all administrators follow a defined guide created by the school's leadership team to identify quality teaching and areas for improvement. Administrators then share

**Teacher Weekly Hours: Instruction and Planning (2009 vs. 2010)**



observations with one another in order to ensure consistency in their observations and feedback.

"I think you drive the biggest change in instruction through observations and feedback," says Bott. "I visit two to five classrooms every day, each for about 10 to 30 minutes, using my laptop to take notes. Afterwards, I email my notes to the teacher. The feedback is not given as a mandate; it's more like things the teacher can think about—strategies to reach a particular student or ways they can consider that might turn a good lesson into a great one."





## Improved Data Systems and More Time for Data Analysis and Planning

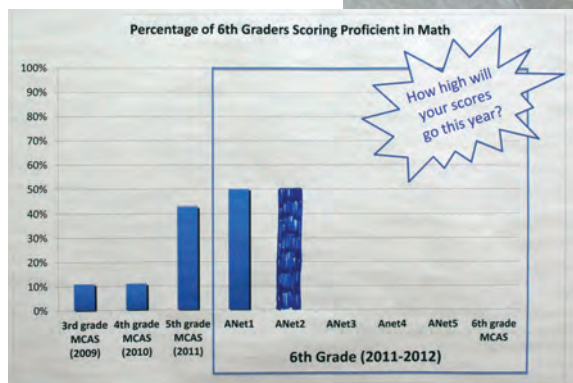
**D**ata is like a guide,” says Toby Romer. “It tells us where we are and also where we need to go as educators.” In prior years, Orchard Gardens teachers had looked at student data only sparingly and mostly in isolation. The school’s new administration prioritized data-driven instruction, hiring Romer to oversee school-wide data analysis and dedicating time before and during the school year for teachers to analyze and plan around data. As he was recruiting new teachers during the spring and summer of 2010, Andrew Bott looked specifically for teachers who were comfortable using data and working in teams. “When we scheduled interviews, I asked teachers to bring in their data from previous classes. You can really tell a lot about how a person teaches based on the data they bring,” says Bott. “What I want to know is, ‘Are you good at using the data to drive instructional outcomes for kids?’ And then I ask specific questions to get an understanding of how someone works on a team.”

Before the 2010-2011 school year began, Orchard Gardens staff reviewed prior years’ MCAS data to identify areas of academic improvement and develop consensus around the specific academic skills on which to focus. Throughout the summer, Romer led trainings on data inquiry cycles, standardizing the protocol and vocabulary by which all teachers would discuss student achievement data during

their weekly 100-minute content level meetings. “Collecting, analyzing, and actually planning around data requires a lot of time,” says Romer. “Setting aside 100 minutes each week to do that vital work was really important for our teachers to teach at a high level.”

At Orchard Gardens, data inquiry cycles consist of three cyclical steps that all teachers follow. First, teachers collect and analyze data. In grades 3 to 8, this includes data from interim assessments in both ELA and math administered every six weeks, created by the Achievement Network (ANET). Second, from the data analysis, teachers identify individual student learning needs, allowing them to set student goals and create lessons to help students reach those goals. As Ben Rockoff, the school’s seventh-grade math teacher, explains, “From the ANET assessments, I can tell what specific concepts a student might be struggling with, whether it’s in geometry or algebra. From that information, I might spend more time with that student on those concepts during class, or work with them one-on-one outside of class.” Third, teachers plan assessments to monitor student progress toward their goals and target students for additional support. Once results from these assessments become available, the cycle starts again. “The data inquiry process is meant to be very teacher-driven,” says Romer. “Grade and content level teams are always allowed and encouraged to make their own decisions about instructional strategies, but we want to establish

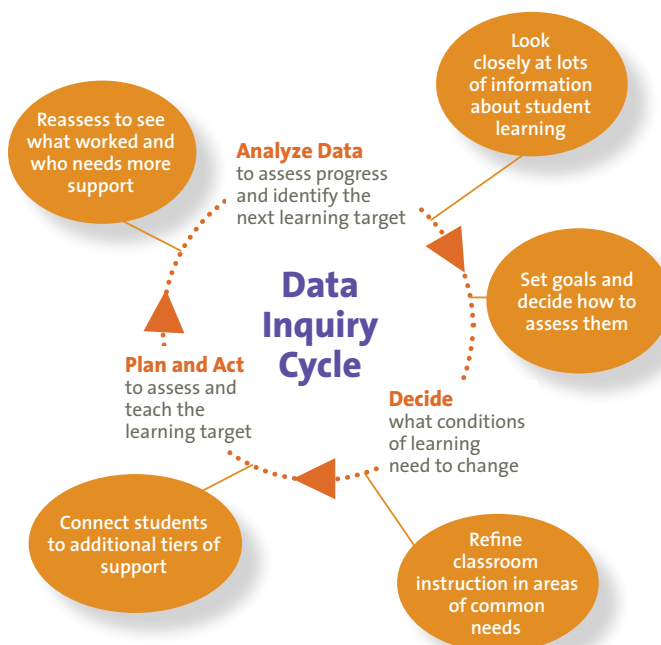




the processes by which they respond to data so they can align those strategies with what they know about their students.”

### Staff Pushback to Data Use

Despite hiring data-driven teachers and implementing structured protocols around data analysis, Orchard Gardens administrators experienced some early pushback from staff. Teachers questioned whether too much emphasis was being placed on data—particularly data from ANET assessments, which had not accounted for students’ low academic levels at the start of the year. “Because we had stressed the role of data so much,” Bott recalls, “we inadvertently sent the message that it was the most important piece when we wanted teachers to just recognize it as one important piece of knowing the student fully.” To resolve the issue, administrators allowed staff to suggest other measures of data and incorporate them into ways to monitor student progress and motivate students. “As the year went on, we had teachers using more of their data to complement the information taken from the ANET data,” says Romer. “For instance, in third grade, teachers planned weekly quizzes together and tracked progress publicly. The fourth-grade and middle-school math teams used data from their own assessments and ANET to identify students for after-school tutoring.”



# More Time to Strengthen School Culture

**B**efore 2010, student expectations—both behavioral and academic—wavered from year to year, as well as from classroom to classroom. “Students got into fights and misbehaved in class a lot,” says Carlos, a seventh grader. “Nothing would happen to them, so they would keep doing it.”

Sarah White, the school’s guidance counselor who has been at the school since 2004, recalls, “By October, many teachers had lost control of their classrooms, and the chaos spilled out into the hallways, into the restrooms, cafeterias, and other spaces.” Says Kellie Njenga, the school’s grades 3-5 Academy director, “Compared to previous years, the biggest difference this year is the school culture. We devoted a lot of time at the beginning of the year in September (2010) to teaching procedures and establishing a consistent set of expectations for everyone.”

To reinforce common expectations for student conduct, Orchard Gardens teacher leaders developed a school-wide incentive system for students called “Paws PRIDE.” Today, any adult in the building can award students tickets—named “paws” after the school’s lion mascot—for exhibiting behavior aligned to the school’s values. These school-wide values are captured in the acronym PRIDE: Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Daring, and Excellence. Students who earn the requisite number of paws are invited to monthly celebrations and

field trips, and they receive rewards and prizes as well. “It was so important for all our teachers to be on the same page before the school year started, even use the same language, to communicate and enforce our expectations,” Njenga recounts. “In the past, we had a lot of students saying, ‘Well, we don’t do it this way in my other teacher’s classroom,’ which was demoralizing for our staff and sent an inconsistent message to our students.”

As with many other aspects of the school’s transformation, Orchard Gardens leaders experienced some initial resistance to these cultural changes. “Students really tested staff at the beginning of the year,” acknowledges Principal Andrew Bott. “Students didn’t know how strongly their teachers were committed to the expectations teachers had set, and they weren’t used to those expectations being consistent in every classroom.” Now, students are testing teachers less frequently and, Orchard Gardens staff believe, the school culture has changed dramatically. Today, district staff who visit the school regularly remark that Orchard Gardens feels like a completely new place. “Once students realized that everyone was going to keep them to a common set of expectations, they actually started to like it,” says Njenga. “We found that our kids wanted to be at a school where everyone is on board and they know what is expected of them.” Says seventh-grade student Jessica, “Everyone follows the rules because the teachers are stricter now, but they also really care about you.”



**“One of the biggest reasons for my students’ success this past year was the extended period of time with them. I could do so much more with my students because I saw them for almost two hours each day—and nine hours each week.”**

**Ben Rockoff**  
Seventh-grade Math Teacher





### Rewarding and Reinforcing Positive Student Behavior

During the 2010-2011 school year, students became increasingly invested in the school's incentive system. "The kids really got into earning paws," says Bott. "Part of it is that it's nice to be recognized daily, and to know what you can get recognized for. The other part is just celebrating and recognizing those students who have earned a lot of paws. We took a group of students to Six Flags Amusement Park this year, and one of our most popular events for recognizing kids was just taking them outside one afternoon in the winter so they could play in the snow." Improvements in student culture led to improvements in classroom instruction, by minimizing the time teachers and administrators spent on behavioral issues. "I definitely was able to support teachers more in their classrooms because of the changes in culture and climate," says Njenga. "I wasn't spending time on behavior. Because of the changes we deliberately made to our culture, it allowed my role to be what it should be." According to seventh-grader Carlos, "Teachers have more control of their classrooms now, and learning is more fun because we can do more activities."

### Improving Staff Culture

Like student culture, staff culture improved as well. "When we first started working together as a math team," recalls Ben Rockoff, the school's seventh-grade math

teacher, and now the school's Academy director for grades 6 to 8, "we got into some pretty heated arguments over how to get our students to the next level. We needed some time to understand how the other members of our team think and work before our planning time could really take off." In addition to providing this valuable time for new colleagues to get to know one another, administrators also took steps to create a positive staff environment. "There was a lot more teacher recognition this past year," Njenga says. "Teachers would be recognized each day during announcements, and Andrew gave up his principal parking spot each week to a different teacher who had gone above and beyond. They were small gestures, but they go a long way in making staff feel appreciated." Due in part to the increased time for common planning, and also because the school leadership has recruited teachers who value collaboration, teachers also communicate and share practices and strategies more frequently. "There is a lot of collaboration," Rockoff confirms, "and I've never been part of such a talented staff." There is no weak link here. When you're around teachers who are so good, it makes you want to learn things from them and improve just to keep up."

# Looking Back and Moving Forward

In 2010, the expanded school day allowed Orchard Gardens to focus more than ever before on improving school culture, teacher development, and data analysis, resulting in significant gains in student achievement. However, additional time, by itself, has not transformed the school. Administrators and teachers at the school have been able to effectively leverage additional time—creating structures, routines, and protocols that have ultimately begun to turn around Orchard Gardens. Most importantly, the improved instruction, school culture, stronger staff, and rigorous data analysis have worked in concert with the expanded learning day to create a more positive educational experience for OGPS students.

Specifically, more planning time for teachers has resulted in stronger lessons for students, particularly in English Language Arts (ELA) and math periods which are now twice as long (110 minutes) as other classes. Along with improving instruction, more time devoted to data analysis has helped identify students in need of individualized support within and beyond the school day. The longer school day also has allowed Orchard Gardens students to engage in enrichment courses beyond MCAS-tested subjects, provided by both the school’s teachers and also Citizen Schools. Says math teacher Ben Rockoff, “The school day is long for students, but it isn’t always about MCAS. We want to give them opportunities to take other classes that would expand their interests and make school more fun for them.”

Moreover, a number of students also participate in academic and enrichment programming beyond the expanded school day. In the summer before the 2010-2011 school year, the school connected 120 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students to outdoor learning opportunities provided by Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center. And, over the district’s February and April vacations, 185 students—85 during February vacation and 100 in April—attended the school’s Acceleration Academy, a week-long MCAS prep course for targeted students.

While the school has dramatically expanded student programming and made great strides in just one year, Orchard Gardens is still far from attaining the ultimate goal its leaders had established earlier: 90 percent proficient or above for all students in both ELA and math by the 2014-2015 school year. During the summer of 2011, Orchard Gardens staff met to discuss improvements to be made in the second year of the school’s turnaround. Among them: improving guided reading instruction in the elementary grades; adopting a different math

	Pre-2010	2010–2011
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 Principals in 7 years</li> <li>• &gt;50% Teacher turnover each year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New principal Andrew Bott given <b>autonomies</b> in staffing and scheduling to turn around OGPS</li> <li>• &lt;10% teacher turnover (2011)</li> </ul>
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrequent</b> data analysis; mostly done by individual teachers</li> <li>• <b>No protocols</b> for data analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Weekly</b> content team meetings to discuss data</li> <li>• <b>Clear protocol</b> for data analysis</li> </ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inconsistent</b> expectations across classrooms</li> <li>• <b>Non-collaborative</b> staff culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consistently enforced expectations</b> and frequent student and staff recognition</li> <li>• <b>Sharing of best practices</b> among staff</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 minutes planning time each week</li> <li>• 6 hour school day for all students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150 minutes common planning time each week</li> <li>• 7-hour school day for Grades K-5 and 8</li> <li>• 10-hour school day for Grades 6 and 7</li> </ul>

curriculum; implementing a new curriculum design framework—Understanding by Design (UbD)—that provides teachers with other measures of student learning; significantly expanding parent outreach efforts, including home visits and creating active parent engagement committees; improving student attendance; and scheduling more time for administrators to conduct observations. “Our culture is one of continuous improvement, for both students and adults,” says Principal Andrew Bott. “Our fourth-grade team is a perfect example of this: We got back their reading MCAS scores and they weren’t where we’d expected them to be this past year. The grade level team was really crushed, but a week later, they got back together and started to brainstorm ideas, and that energy has really taken off. I have no doubt their scores will increase this coming year.”



During the 2011-2012 school year, Orchard Gardens has added expanded-day programming through a new partnership with BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life), that serves 250 students until 5:30pm.

Additionally, Citizen Schools has expanded its programming to provide academic supports and high school application assistance for targeted eighth graders until 5:30pm. In total, all students at Orchard Gardens are in school at least one extra hour beyond the standard Boston Public Schools schedule, with approximately 550

of the school's 800 students—nearly 70 percent—staying from 7:30am to 5:30pm. Although school leaders recognize the danger in moving too fast and adding more onto an already busy schedule, they also see the urgent need to quickly turn around a failing school. "If it takes us five years to turn around this school," says Bott, "that means we haven't done anything for all our kids in grades 3 and above. Our kids don't have the luxury to wait for this school's transformation. They needed this to happen yesterday."



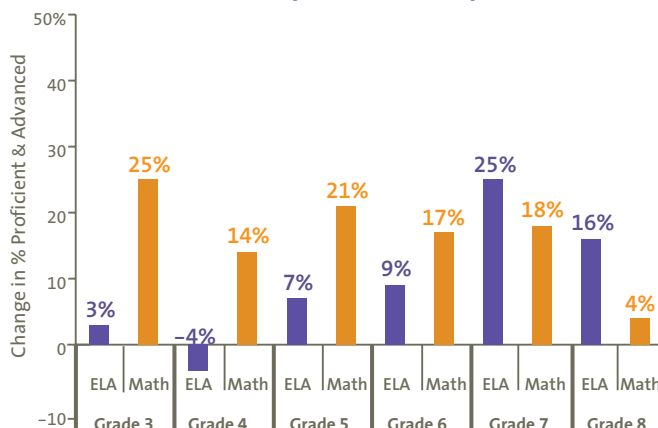
# Results at Orchard Gardens

In just one academic year, from 2010-2011, Orchard Gardens has dramatically improved the instruction and programming students receive. Among the highlights:

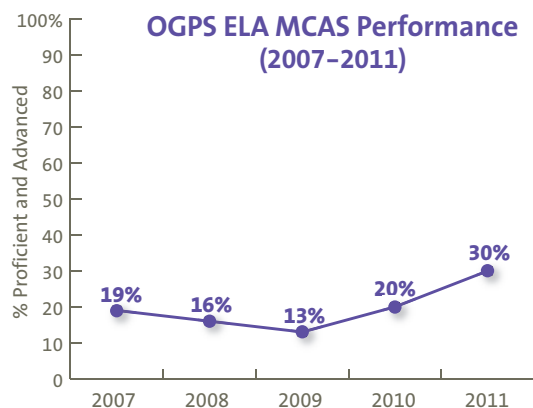
- **Higher English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Achievement**

In 2011, school-wide MCAS proficiency rates rose in both ELA (30 percent) and math (35 percent), higher than they ever had been in the school's seven-year history. The school's Student Growth Percentile (SGP)—an index that compares yearly growth in individual student MCAS scores against that of other students with similar testing backgrounds—was 63 in ELA and 79 in math. (Massachusetts considers an SGP of 60 as 'high growth' in both subjects.) The median SGP for students in Orchard Gardens ranks better than 87 percent of schools in Massachusetts in ELA and 98 percent of schools in math.

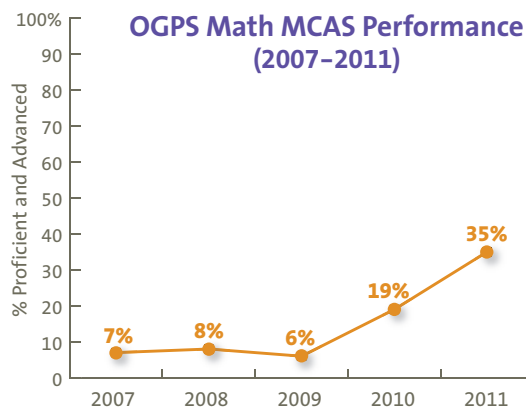
## Change in MCAS Proficiency Rates (2010 vs. 2011)



## OGPS ELA MCAS Performance (2007-2011)



## OGPS Math MCAS Performance (2007-2011)



- **Increased Teacher Satisfaction with Professional Development (PD)**

In 2010, less than half the teachers who were surveyed found the school's professional development to be useful. During 2010-2011, in contrast, teacher-led, bi-weekly PD received an average score of 4.1 out of 5 from all teachers. "Having our own teachers lead sessions did a few things," says grades 3-5 Academy Director Kellie Njenga. "First, we're recognizing our teachers for their strengths. Second, presenters are getting valuable feedback from the ILT (Instructional Leadership Team). Third, as an audience, teachers are much more likely to listen to one of their peers than an outside coach or someone brought in by the district."

- **Broader Student Opportunities and Stronger Partnerships**

To staff additional time for sixth- and seventh-grade students, Orchard Gardens partnered with Citizen Schools to deliver academic and enrichment programming for all students in these grades from 2:30 to 5:30 on Monday through Thursday. Citizen Schools—along with Boston Medical Center and City Year, among other school partners—also provided a varying number of services for students in all grades. Additionally, the school utilized Teach Plus and Teach for America (TFA) to identify and recruit highly skilled teachers, as well as Mass 2020 to implement the expanded-day schedule.



## Transforming Schools through Expanded Learning Time: Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School

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